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## BRED IN THE BONE.

CHAPTER I.—CAREW OF CROMPTON.

HAD you lived in Breakneckshire twenty years ago, or even anywhere in the Midlands, it would be superfluous to tell you of Carew of Crompton. Everybody thereabouts was acquainted with him either personally or by hearsay. You must almost certainly have known somebody who had had an adventure with that eccentric personage—one who had been ridden down by him, for that mighty hunter never turned to the right hand nor to the left for any man, nor paid attention to any rule of road; or one who, more fortunate, had been 'cleared' by him on his famous black horse *Tre-bizond*, an animal only second to his master in the popular esteem. There are as many highly coloured pictures of his performance of this flying feat in existence, as there are of 'Dick Turpin clearing the Turnpike-gate.' Sometimes it is a small tradesman cowering down in his cart among the calves, while the gallant Squire hurtles over him with a 'Stoop your head, butcher.' Sometimes it is a wagoner, reminding one of Commodore Trunnion's involuntary deed of 'derring-do,' who, between two high banks, perceives with marked astonishment this portent flying over himself and convoy. But, at all events, the thing was done; perhaps on more than one occasion, and was allowed on all hands not only as a fact, but as characteristic of their sporting idol. It was 'Carew all over,' or 'Just like Carew.'

This phrase was also applied to many other heroic actions. The idea of 'keel-hauling,' for instance, adapted from the nautical code, was said to be practically enforced in the case of duns, attorneys, and other objectionable persons, in the lake at Crompton; while the administration of pommellings to poachers and agriculturists generally, by the athletic squire, was the theme of every tongue. These punishments, though severe, were much sought after by a certain class, the same to which the purchased

free and independent voter belongs, for the clenched fist invariably became an open hand after it had done its work—a golden ointment, that is, was always applied after these inflictions, such as healed all wounds.

Carew of Crompton might at one time have been member for the county, if he had pleased; but he desired no seat except in the saddle, or on the driving-box. He shewed such skill in riding and with 'the ribbons,' that some persons supposed that his talents must be very considerable in other matters, and affected to regret their misuse; there were reports that he knew Latin better than his own chaplain; and was, or had been, so diligent a student of Holy Writ, that he could give you chapter and verse for everything. But it must be allowed that others were not wanting to whisper that these traits of scholarship were greatly exaggerated, and that all the wonder lay in the fact, that the Squire knew anything of such matters at all; nay, a few even ventured to express their opinion that, but for his recklessness and his money, there was nothing more remarkable in Carew than in other spendthrifts; but this idea was never mooted within twenty miles of Crompton. The real truth is, that the time was unsuitable to the display of the Squire's particular traits. He would have been an eminent personage had he been a Norman, and lived in the reign of King John. Even now, if he could have removed his establishment to Poland, and assumed the character of a Russian proprietor, he would doubtless have been a great prince. There was a savage magnificence about him, and also certain degrading traits which suggested the Hetman Platoff. Unfortunately, he was a Squire in the Midlands. The contrast, however, of his splendid vagaries with the quiet time and industrious locality in which he lived, while it diminished his influence, did, on the

other hand, no doubt enhance his reputation. He was looked upon (as Waterford and Mytton used to be) as a *lusus nature*, an eccentric, an altogether exceptional personage, to whom license was permitted; and the charitable divided the human race, for his sake, into Men, Women, and Carew.

The same philosophic few, however, who denied him talent, averred that he was half mad; and indeed Fortune had so lavishly showered her favours on him from his birth, that it might well be that they had turned his head. His father had died while Carew was but an infant, so that the surplus income from his vast estates had accumulated to an enormous sum when he attained his majority. In the meantime, his doting mother had supplied him with funds out of all proportion to his tender years. At ten years old, he had a pack of harriers of his own, and hunted the county regularly twice a week. At the public school, where he was with difficulty persuaded to remain for a short period, he had an allowance the amount of which would have sufficed for the needs of a professional man with a wife and family, and yet it is recorded of him that he had the audacity—'the boy is father to the man,' and it was 'so like Carew,' they said—to complain to his guardian, a great lawyer, that his means were insufficient. He also demanded a lump sum down, on the ground that (being of the ripe age of fourteen) he contemplated marriage. The reply of the legal dignitary is preserved, as well as the young gentleman's application: 'If you can't live upon your allowance, you may starve, sir; and if you marry, you shall not have your allowance.'

You had only—having authority to do so—to advise Carew, and he was positively certain to go counter to your opinion; and did you attempt to oppose him in any purpose, you would infallibly insure its accomplishment. He did not marry at fourteen, indeed, but he did so clandestinely in less than three years afterwards, and had issue; but at the age of five-and-thirty, when our stage opens, he had neither wife nor child, but lived as a bachelor at Crompton, which was sometimes called 'the open house,' by reason of its profuse hospitalities; and sometimes 'Liberty Hall,' on account of its license; otherwise, it was never called anything but Crompton; never Crompton Hall, or Crompton Park—but simply Crompton, just like Stowe or Blenheim. And yet the park at Crompton was as splendid an appanage of glebe and avenue, of copse and dell, as could be desired. It was all laid out upon a certain plan—somewhere in the old house was the very parchment on which the chase was ordered like a garden; a dozen drives here radiated from one another like the spokes of a wheel, and here four mighty avenues made a St Andrew's cross in the very centre—but the area was so immense, and the stature of the trees so great, that nothing of this formality could be observed in the park itself. Not only were the oaks and beeches of large, and often of giant proportions, but the very ferns grew so tall, that whole herds of fallow

deer were hidden in it, and could only be traced by their bounds. There were red deer also, almost as numerous, with branching antlers, curiously mossed, as though they had acquired that vegetation by rubbing, as they often did, against the high wooden pale—itself made picturesque by age—which hedged them in their silvan prison for miles. Moreover, there were wild-cattle, as at Chartley (though not of the same breed), the repute of whose fierceness kept the few public paths that intersected this wild domain very unfrequented. These animals, imported half a century ago, were of no use nor of particular beauty, and would have dwindled away, from the unfitness of the locality for their support, but that they were recruited periodically, and at a vast expense. It was enough to cause their present owner to strain every nerve to retain them, because they were so universally objected to. They had gored one man to death, and occasionally maimed others, but, as Carew, to do him justice, was by no means afraid of them himself, and ran the same risk, and far often than other people, he held he had a right to retain them. Nobody was obliged to come into his park unless they liked, he said, and if they did, they must 'chance a tossing.' The same detractors, whose opinion we have already quoted, affirmed that the Squire kept these cattle for the very reason that was urged against their existence: the fear of these horned police kept the park free from strangers, and thereby saved him half-a-dozen keepers.

That his determination in the matter was pig-headed and brutal, there is no doubt; but the Squire's nature was far from exclusive, and the idea of saving in anything, it is certain, never entered into his head. The time, indeed, was slowly but surely coming when the park should know no more not only its wild-cattle, but many a rich copse and shadowy glade. Not a stately oak nor far-spreading beech but was doomed, sooner or later, to be cut down, to prop for a moment the falling fortunes of their spendthrift owner; but at the time of which we speak there was no visible sign of the coming ruin. It is recorded of a brother prodigal, that after enormous losses and expenses, his steward informed him that if he would but consent to live upon seven thousand a year for the next ten years, the estate would recover itself. 'Sir,' returned he in anger, 'I would rather die than live on seven thousand a year.' Our Carew would have given the same reply had twice that income been suggested to him, and been applauded for the gallant answer. The hint of any necessity for curtailment would probably have caused him to double his expenditure forthwith, though, indeed, that would have been difficult to effect. He had already two packs of hounds, with which he hunted on alternate days, and he had even endeavoured to do so on the Sunday; but the obsequious 'county' had declined to go with him to that extent, and this anomaly of the nineteenth century had been compelled to confine himself on the

seventh day to cock-fighting in the library. He kept a bear to bait (as well as a chaplain to bully), and ferrets ran loose about Crompton as mice do in other houses. He had a hunter for every week in the year, yet he often rode his horses to death. He had a stud of racers, and it was this, or rather his belief in their powers, which eventually drained his vast resources. Not one of them ever won a great race. This was not their fault, nor that of their trainer, but his own; he interfered in their management, and would have things his own way; he would command everything, except success, which was beyond his power, and in missing that he lost all. Otherwise, he was lucky as a mere gambler. His audacity, and the funds he always had at his disposal, carried him triumphantly, where many a more prudent but less wealthy player withdrew from the contest. Games of skill had no attraction for him, but at an earlier date in his career he had been a terror to the club-keepers in St James's, where his luck and obstinacy had broken a dozen banks. It was said—and very likely with truth—that he had once cut double or quits for ten thousand pounds.

His moral character, as respected the softer sex, was such as you might expect from these traits. No modest woman had been seen at Crompton for many a year; although not a few such—if at least good birth and high position include modesty—had, since his majority, striven to give a lawful mistress to the place. His eccentricities had not alarmed them, and his shamelessness had not abashed them. Though his constitution was said to be breaking up through unparalleled excesses, his heart, it was currently reported in domestic circles, was sound; and what a noble feat would it be to reclaim him! It was also reckoned impossible that any amount of extravagance could have seriously embarrassed such a property as he had inherited, indeed long since, but of which he had had the sole control only a few years. At the time of which we speak, Carew was but thirty-five, though he looked much older. His muscles were still firm, his limbs yet active, and his hand and eye as steady with the gun or bridle as ever. But his bronzed face shewed signs of habitual intemperance; his head was growing prematurely bald; and once or twice, though the fact was known to himself only, his iron nerve had of late failed him. The secret consciousness of this last fact made him more venturesome and reckless than ever. 'Time,' he swore, 'should never play him tricks. He was as good a man as ever he was. There was a quarter of a million more or less to be got through yet, and, by Jove, he would see it out.' Of course he did not swear by Jove; for, as we have said, he kept a chaplain, and was therefore no heathen.

One of the arguments that the mothers of those young ladies who sought his hand were wont to make use of, to their great comfort, was that Mr Carew was a churchman. There was a private chapel at Crompton, the existence of which, of course, explained why his presence did not grace the parish church. Then his genealogy was of the most satisfactory description. Carews had dwelt at Crompton in direct succession for many a cen-

tury. Charles I., it is almost unnecessary to state, had slept there—that most locomotive of monarchs seems to have honoured all old English mansions with a night's visit—and had hunted in the chase next morning. Queen Elizabeth had also been most graciously pleased to visit her subject, John Carew, on which occasion a wooden tower had been erected for her in the park, from which to see 'ten buckes, all having fayre lawe, pulled down with grey-houndes;' she shot deer, too, with her own virgin hands, for which purpose 'a cross-bowe was delivered to her by a nymph with a sweet song.' These things, however, were in no way commemorated. Carew was all in all: his devouring egotism swallowed up historical association. His favourite female bull-dog, with her pups, slept in the royal martyr's apartment. The places in Crompton Chase held remarkable were those where its present owner had made an unprecedentedly long shot, or had beaten off one of the wild-cattle without a weapon, or had run down a stag on foot. There was no relic of ancient times preserved whatever, except that at midsummer, as in Lyme, that very curious custom was kept of driving the red deer round the park, and then swimming them through the lake before the house—a very difficult feat, by-the-by, to any save those who have been accustomed to 'drive deer.' One peculiar virtue of Carew—he was addressed, by the way, by all his inferiors, and some of his equals, as 'Squire' only—was, we had almost forgotten to say, his regard for truth, which may truly be said to have been 'passionate,' if we consider the effect produced in him when he discovered that any one had told him a falsehood. He would fall upon them tooth and nail, if they were menials; and if guests, he would forbid them his house. This was surely one excellent trait. Yet it was maintained by those carpers already alluded to, that to tell truth was comparatively easy in one who was as careless of all opinion as he was independent in means; moreover, that a love of truth is sometimes found to exist in very bad company, as in the case of the Spartan boy who stole the fox; and if the veracious Squire did not steal foxes (which he did, by-the-by, indirectly, for a bagged one was his delight), he was guilty of much worse things. However, this is certain, that Carew of Crompton never told a lie.

#### CHAPTER II.—WAITING FOR AN INTRODUCTION.

We have said that Carew was not exclusive; so long as he had his own way in everything, he was good-tempered, and so very good-natured that he permitted not only his friends but his dependants to do pretty much as they would. He was a tyrant only by fits and starts, and in the meantime there was anarchy at Crompton. Every soul in the place, from the young lords, its master's guests, down to the earth-stopper's assistant, who came for his quantum of ale to the back door, did pretty much as seemed right in his own eyes. There were times when everything had to be done in a moment under the master's eye, no matter at what loss, or even risk to limb or life; but usually there was no particular time for anything—except dinner. The guests rose in the morning, or lay in bed all day, exactly as they pleased, and had their meals in public or in their own rooms; but when the great dinner-gong sounded for the second time, it was expected that every man should be ready for the

feast, and wearing (with the single exception of the chaplain) a red coat. The dinner-parties at Crompton—and there was a party of the most heterogeneous description daily—were literally, therefore, very gay affairs; the banquet was sumptuous, and the great cellars were laid under heavy contribution. Only, if a guest did happen to be unpunctual, from whatever cause, even if it were illness, the host would send for his bear, or his half-dozen bulldogs, and proceed to the sick man's room, with the avowed intention (and he always kept his word) of 'drawing the badger.' In spite of his four-legged auxiliaries, this was not always an easy task. His recklessness, though not often, did sometimes meet with its match in that of the badger; and in one chamber-door at Crompton we have ourselves seen a couple of bullet-holes, which shewed that assault on one side had met with battery upon the other. With such rough manners as Carew had, it may seem strange that he was never called to account for them at twelve paces; but, in the first place, it was thoroughly understood that he would have 'gone out' (a fact which has doubtless given pause to many a challenge), and would have shot as straight as though he were partridge-shooting; and secondly, as we have said, he had a special license for practical jokes: the subjects of them, too, were not men of delicate susceptibilities, for none such by any accident could have been his guests. In consideration of good fare, good wine, a good mount in the hunting-field, excellent shooting, and of a loan from the host whenever they were without funds, men even of good position were found to 'put up' very good-naturedly with the eccentricities of the master of Crompton, and he had his house full half the year. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that his servants were found willing to compound for some occasional ill usage, in return for general laxity of rule, and many unconsidered trifles in the way of perquisites. His huntsmen and whips got now and then a severe beating; his grooms found it very inconvenient, when 'Squire' took it into his mad head to sally forth on horseback across country by moonlight; and still worse, when he would have the whole stud out, and set every servant in his employ, not excepting his fat French cook, in the saddle, to see how they would comport themselves under the unaccustomed excitement of a steeple-chase. But, upon the whole, the retainers at Crompton had an easy berth of it, and seldom voluntarily took their discharge.

Perhaps the best situations, as being less liable to the *per contras* in the shape of the master's passionate outbursts, were those of the park-keepers, of whom old Walter Grange was one. He was a bachelor, as almost all of them were. It was not good for any one with wife or daughter (if these were young, at least) to take service with Carew at all; and living in a pleasant cottage, far too large for him, in the very heart of the chase, Grange thought it no harm to take a lodger. The same old woman who cooked his victuals and kept his rooms tidy, would do the same office for another who was not very particular in his food, and could rough it a little in other respects; and such a one had Walter lately found in the person of a young landscape-painter, Richard Yorke. This gentleman was a stranger to Crompton and its neighbourhood; but having (as he said) happened to see a certain guarded advertisement in the *Times* headed

'To Artists and Others,' that lodgings in the midst of forest scenery could be procured for what seemed next to nothing, he had come down from London in the autumn on the chance, and found them suitable.

To poet or painter's eye, indeed, the lodge was charming: it was small, of course, but very picturesquely built, and afforded the new tenant a bow-windowed sitting-room, with an outlook such as few dwellings in England, and probably none elsewhere, could offer. In the foreground was an open lawn, on which scores of fine-plumaged pheasants strutted briskly, and myriads of rabbits came forth at eve to play and nibble—bordered by crops of fern, above which moved stately the antlered deer. A sentry oak or two of mighty girth guarded this open space; but on both sides, vast glades shut in the prospect with a wall of checkered light and shadow, that deepened into silvan gloom. But right in front the expanding view seemed without limit, and exhibited all varieties of forest scenery: coppices with 'Autumn's fiery finger' on their tender leaves; still shining pools, where water-fowl bred and dwelt; broad pathways, across which the fallow deer could bound at leisure; or one would leap in haste, and half a hundred follow in groundless panic. The wealth of animal life in that green solitude, where the voice of man was hardly ever heard, was prodigious; the rarest birds were common there; even those who had their habitations by the sea were sometimes lured to this as silent spot, and skimmed above its undulating dells as o'er the billow. The eagle and the osprey had been caught there; and, indeed, a specimen of each was caged in a sort of aviary, which Grange had had constructed at the back of the lodge; while Yorke's sitting-room was literally stuffed full of these strange feathered visitants, which had fallen victims to the keeper's gun. The horse-hair sofa had a noble cover of deerskin; the footstool and the fire-rug were made of furs, or skins that would have fetched their price elsewhere, and been held rare, although once worn by British beast or 'varmint.' The walls were stuck with antlers, and the very handle of the bell-rope was the fore-foot of a stag. Each of these had its story; and nothing pleased the old man better than to have a listener to his long-winded tales of how, and where, and when the thing was slain. All persons whose lives are passed in the open air, and in comparative solitude, seem in this respect to be descendants of Dame Quickly; their wearisome digressions and unnecessary preciseness as to date and place try the patience of all other kinds of men, and this was the chief cross which Grange's lodger had to bear as an offset to the excellence of his quarters. It must be confessed that he did not bear it meekly. To stop old Walter in mid talk—without an open quarrel—was an absolute impossibility; but his young companion would turn the stream of his discourse, without much ceremony, from the records of slaughter into another channel (almost as natural to it)—the characteristics and peculiarities of his master Carew. Of this subject, notwithstanding that that other made him fret and fume so, Yorke never seemed to tire.

'I should like to know your master,' he had said half musingly, after listening to one of these strange recitals, soon after his arrival; to which Grange had answered laughing: 'Well, Squire's a



very easy one to know. He picks up friends by every roadside, without much troubling himself as to who they are, I promise you.'

The young man's face grew dark with anger; but the idea of self-respect, far less of pride, was necessarily strange to a servant of Carew's. So Grange went on, unconscious of offence: 'Now, if you were a young woman,' he chuckled, 'and as good-looking as you are as a lad, there would be none more welcome than yourself up at the big house. Pretty gals, bless ye, need no introduction yonder; and yet one would have thought that Squire would know better than to meddle with the mischievous hussies—he took his lesson early enough at all events. Why, he married before he was your age, and not half so much of a man to look at, neither. You have heard talk of that, I daresay, however, in London?'

Richard Yorke, as the keeper had hinted, was a very handsome lad—brown-cheeked, blue-eyed, and with rich clustering hair as black as a sloe; but at this moment he did not look prepossessing. He frowned and flashed a furious glance upon the speaker; but old Grange, who had an eye like a hawk for the objects that a hawk desires, was as blind as a mole to any evidence of human emotion short of a punch on the head, and went on unheeding.

'Well, I thought you must ha' heard o' that too. We folk down here heard o' nothing else for all that year. She got hold o' Squire, this 'ere woman did, though he was but a schoolboy, and she old enough to be his mother, bless ye, and was married to him. And they kep' it secret for six months; and that's what bangs me most about it all. For Carew, he can keep nothing secret—nothing: he blurts all out; and that's why he seems so much worse than he is to some people. Oh, she must ha' been a deep one, she must.'

'You never saw her, then?' asked Yorke, carelessly shading his eyes, as though from the western sun, which, Midas-like, was turning everything it touched in that broad landscape into gold.

'O yes, I see her: she was here with Squire near half a year. Mrs Carew—the old lady, I mean—was at Crompton then; and the young one—though she was no chicken neither—she tried to get her turned out; but she wasn't clever enough, clever as she was, for that job. Carew loved his mother, as indeed he ought, for she had never denied him anything since he was born; and so, in that pitched battle between the women, he took his mother's side. And in the end the old lady took his, and with a vengeance. I do think that if it had not been for her, young madam would have held on— Why, what's the matter, young gentleman? That was an oath fit for the mouth of Squire hisself.'

'It's this cursed toothache,' exclaimed Yorke passionately. 'It has worried me so ever since you began to speak, that I should have gone mad if I had not let out at it a bit. Never mind me; I'm better now.'

'Well, that's like the Squire again,' returned the keeper admiringly. 'He seems allus to find himself better for letting out at things, and at people too, for the matter of that. To hear him sometimes, one would almost think the ground must open; not that he means any harm, but it's a way he's got; but it does frighten them as is not used to him, surely. I mind that day when

he first took the fox-hounds out, and Mr Howard the sheriff as was that year—he's dead and gone long since, and his grandson is sheriff now again, which is curious—well, he happened to ride a bit too forward with the dogs, and our young master — O dear, dear,' and the old man began to chuckle like a hen that has laid two eggs at a time, 'how he did swear at the old man!'

'You were talking about Mrs Carew the elder,' observed the artist coolly.

'Was I? True, so I was. Well, she and the young Squire was for all the world like a deer with her fawn—very tender and timid-like, so long as he was let alone; but when this 'ere woman came, as she considered his enemy, she was as bold as a red stag—nay, as one of our wild-cattle. It was through her, I say, that the bride got the sack at last; and when that was done, the old lady seemed to have done her work, and was content enough when her son portioned her off, and persuaded her to live at the dower-house at Morden; and indeed she could hardly have staid at Crompton, with such goings on as there are now—feastings, and fightings, and flirtings'—

'Just so,' interrupted the young painter; 'she got her way, I know. But with respect to the younger lady, Mrs Charles Carew, what was she like, and what did people say of her?'

'Well, not much good, I reckon. What could they say of a schoolmistress who marries her pupil?'

'A schoolmistress, was she?' said Yorke in a strange husky voice. 'We never heard that in London.'

'Well, she was summat of that sort, sir, though I don't know exactly what. Young as he was, Carew was not quite child enough to be at a dame's school, that's true. But she was not a mere servant-girl, as some said, anyway, for she could play and sing—ay, songs that pleased him too—and she had book-learning, I've heard, such as would have astonished you; so that some folks said she was a witch, and had the devil's help to catch Carew. But a woman don't want magic, bless you, to come over a lad of seventeen—not she. What nonsense people talk! If any pretty girl about Crompton was to take a fancy to you now, as is like enough, do you suppose?'

'But I thought you said that Mrs Charles Carew was not a girl?'

'Nor more she was: she was five-and-thirty if she was a day; and yet—there was the wonder of it—she did not look much over twenty! I've heard our gentlemen, when out shooting, liken her to some fine Frenchwoman as never grew old, and was fell in love with unbeknown by her grandson. Now, what was her name? I got it written down somewheres in my old pocket-book: it was summut like Longclothes.'

'*Ninon de l'Enclos*?' suggested Yorke without a smile.

'Ay, that's the name. Well, Mrs Charles Carew, as you call her, was just like her, and a regular everlasting! She was not what you would call pretty, but very "taking" looking, and with a bloom and freshness on her as would have deceived any man. Her voice was like music itself, and she moved like a stag o' ten; and the Squire being always manly-looking and swarthy, like yourself, there was really little difference between them to look at. I daresay she's gone

all to pieces now, as women will do, while the Squire looks much the same as he did then.'

'I have never even seen him,' said the landscape-painter moodily.

'Well, don't you stare at him, young master, when you do get that chance, that's all. Some comes down here merely to look at him, as if he was a show, and that puts him in a pretty rage, I promise you; though to get to know him, as I say, is easy enough, if you go the right way about it. If you were a good rider, for instance, and could lead the field one day when the hunting begins, he'd ask you to dinner to a certainty; or if you could drive stags—why, he would have given you a hundred pounds last midsummer, when we couldn't get the beasts to swim the lake. There's a pretty mess come o' that, by-the-bye; for, out of the talk there was among the gentlemen about that difficulty, the Squire laid a bet as he would drive stags; not as we do, mind you, but in harness, like carriage-horses; and, cus me, if he hasn't had the break out half-a-dozen times with four red deer in it, and you may see him tearing through the park, with mounted grooms and keepers on the right and left of him, all galloping their hardest, and the Squire with the ribbons, a-holloaing like mad! For my part, I don't like such pranks, and would much sooner not be there to see 'em. There will be mischief some day with it yet, for all that old Lord Orford, down at Newmarket some fifty years ago, used to do the same thing, they say. It ain't in nature that stags should be driv'n four-in-hand, even by Carew. However, the Squire won his wager; and we haven't seen none o' that wild work o' late weeks, though we may see it again any day.'

'I have heard of that strange exploit,' observed Yorke; 'but as driving deer, even in the ordinary way, is not my calling, and as I am no great rider, even if I had a horse, I don't see how I am to introduce myself to your mad Squire, and yet I have a great fancy for his acquaintance. Do you think he'd buy any of these drawings, taken in his own park, from his own timber?' The young man touched a portfolio, already well stocked with studies of oak and beech. 'Here is a sketch of the Decoy Pond, for instance, with the oldest tree in the chase beside it; would not that interest him, think you? You think not?'

'Well, young gentleman,' said the keeper frankly, 'if I say no, it ain't that I mean any slight to your drawing. It's like the tree enough, for certain, with the very hoop of iron as I put round it with my own hands twenty years ago—and, by the same token, it will want another before this winter's out; but I don't think the Squire cares much for such matters. He might, maybe, just give a look at it, or he might bid you go to the devil for a paper-staining son of a well—what you will. He does not care a farthing, bless 'ee, for all the great pictures in his own gallery, though they cost his grandfather a mint of money, and are certainly a fine sight—so far as the frames go. And, on the other hand, if he happens to be cross-grained that day, he might tear it up before you could say "Hold," and kick you down the Hall steps into the bargain, as he has done to many a one: that's where it is, you see, the Squire is so chancy.'

'I don't think he would kick me down his Hall steps,' said Yorke grimly.

The keeper grinned. 'Well, you see, nobody can tell that till it's tried. The Squire is a regular

bruiser, I promise you, though I grant you are a strapping young fellow, and you have told me that you know how to use your fists. That's a great thing, mind you, for a man to ha' learnt; a deal better than Latin or such-like, in my opinion. Folks talk of life-preservers and pistols, but there's nothing like a good pair of well-handled fists when one has to tackle a poacher. I've been at Crompton, man and boy, these fifty years, and had a good many rough-and-tumbles with that sort, and I have never had the worst of it yet. It prevents bloodshed on both sides; for if you haven't no shooting-iron, there's few Englishmen, poachers or not, who will draw trigger on you; and as for a bludgeon, it's as likely to be in my hand as another's after the first half-minute.'

'Is there much poaching now at Crompton?' inquired Yorke mechanically. It would have been plain to any less obtuse observer than his companion that he no longer gave him his attention.

'Well, no; nothing to be called serious has happened lately; though I daresay we shall have some scrimmages as the winter comes on; there's allus a good deal of what I calls hanky-panky work in the fawn season. Women and children—especially children—will come into the park, under pretence o' picking up sticks; and they'll put away a new-dropped fawn in their bundles, if they get the chance; and then they take it home, to be reared until it grows up, and can be sold for venison.'

'I should have thought there would have been no market for such a commodity—that is, in the case of people such as you describe,' observed Yorke, yawning.

'Market!' echoed the keeper contemptuously; 'there'd be a market to-morrow morning for the whole herd o' our wild-cattle, if they were stolen to-night: there'd be a market for a rhinoceros or a halligator, if we happened to keep 'em, bless 'ee, as easy as for a sucking-pig! But I don't call that poaching—I mean the fawn-stealing. It's the professionals from the Midland towns as come by tens and twenties at a time, as is our trouble. We generally gets wind o' 'em beforehand, and then out we all goes, and Squire with us—for he dearly loves a fight—and then there's broken crowns and bloody noses; but, thank God, there's been no murder done, at least not in my time, at Crompton. And that reminds me, sir, that it's time for me to start on my evening rounds.'

'Well, when you next have any news of such an incursion, Grange, I hope you will let me make one of your party,' said Yorke good-humouredly. 'I can hit out straight from the shoulder; and perhaps I might get to know the Squire that way.'

'And as likely a road to lead you into his good graces, sir,' said the keeper rising, 'as any I know. Are you for a walk round the park this fine evening, sir?'

'No, not to-night, thank you, Grange. I have got to fill in this sketch a bit, that I took this morning.'

'Then, good-night, sir, for I shan't return before daylight.'

But it was not till long after the keeper had taken his departure that Richard Yorke turned hand or eye to his unfinished drawing. He sat staring straight before him with steadfast eyes and thoughtful face, for hours, murmuring to himself disjointed sentences; and ever and anon he started

up and paced the little room with rapid strides. 'He shall see me, and know me too,' muttered he at last between his clenched teeth, 'though it should cost one of us our lives. She shall not say I came down to this wilderness, like some hunted beast to covert, for nothing.'

### THE CHANNEL PASSAGE.

THE passage from Dover to Calais, or from Folkestone to Boulogne, is not a long one either in time or in distance; but it is nearly always unpleasant, and often very abominable. There is naturally a chopping cross-sea in that part of the Channel, due to conflicting tides, winds, and currents; and the steam-boats feel the rolling motion all the more through being so small. Hence arises at once the question, why are they so small? This, it appears, is due to the fact that larger boats would draw more water than the harbours can command. All the four harbours are shallow at low tide, all are much encumbered with mud or sand, and all are affected by winds, which call for shelter even beyond that which is at present provided. Whether we shall improve the harbours, so as to permit the use of larger and better vessels; or whether we shall adopt some larger and bolder scheme—is the problem.

In a former article on this subject,\* we spoke of schemes for a tunnel. Some of the projectors talked of iron shafts running up from the bed of the sea as a means of ventilation; but they gave very few hints of the mode in which they would execute the work. More recently came M. Favre's scheme, in which the tunnel was to be more than a hundred feet below the bed of the sea; shafts sunk through the sea and sea-bed were to furnish facilities for excavating the tunnel in the first instance, and for ventilating it afterwards; and railway trains were to be propelled through it by atmospheric pressure. Then came the plans of Mr Nicol and Mr Austin: the one for a tunnel lined with an iron tube; the other for three parallel tunnels, at a depth of sixty feet below the sea-bed. And then came M. Thomé de Gamond's scheme, for a tunnel ventilated by conical shafts, one of which was to be of such gigantic dimensions as to permit of winding roadways down its interior, to a station more than a hundred feet below the bottom of the sea! It is dangerous to laugh at engineers, for they have a knack of turning the laugh against us by doing the very things which we have pronounced impossible; but *this* scheme certainly is a staggerer. At the present time, some of our most noteworthy engineers, such as Mr Hawkshaw, Mr Brunlees, and Mr Remington, are seriously directing their best energies to tunnel-schemes; under a belief that, notwithstanding all difficulties, a railway tunnel will be better than any other plan for crossing the Channel.

But the tunnel-makers do not have the discussion to themselves. Mr Bateman, a very eminent engineer, says that he can *lay down a railway on the actual bed of the sea*, and so avoid the trouble of tunnelling beneath it! This idea grew up from small beginnings. Early in the century, two Frenchmen, MM. Franchot and Tessié de Mottray, proposed a plan for laying down

a cast-iron tube on the bed of the sea, large enough to take wheel-carriages; but they did not develop the matter with any clearness. M. Payerne, another Frenchman, preferring masonry to iron, proposed to form a smooth causeway of concrete at the bottom of the sea, by the aid of the diving-bell; and to build on it a brick or stone tunnel of any desired dimensions. Mr Winton has a plan for laying down a wrought-iron tube at the bottom of the sea, big enough to admit a railway train; Mr Chalmers has another, that would cost twelve millions sterling; and Mr Cowan a third, in which the tube is to be lined with concrete. Mr Zerah Colburn speaks well of a plan for constructing a tube on shore, in pieces one thousand feet long, towing them out, sinking them, and joining them end to end at the bottom of the sea. Mr Page, engineer of the beautiful new Westminster Bridge, proposes to build on shore eight conical shafts of iron, tow them out, sink them, and fill in the space between an inner and an outer cone with concrete. A light-house would be built at the top of each cone; while at the bottom would be openings to the tube. The tube would be constructed in quarter-mile lengths, sunk, and joined end to end by workmen who would descend the shafts, and burrow away in the water under the protection of diving-bells. Some engineers assert that the men could not work under such a tremendous pressure of water; but Mr Page declares that he has a plan to insure this; and, as for ventilation, he will provide eight permanent open shafts to ventilate the tube at all times. Mr Bateman, in like manner, places reliance on a tube, but would construct it in a different way. It would be thirteen feet in interior diameter, and four inches thick. The sections would be built up and put together within a peculiar kind of air-tight chamber, at the bottom of the sea; and this chamber would be pushed on through the water, by hydraulic power, as fast as the tube is completed. One of the other engineers says: 'There would be sixty thousand joints in your tube, any one of which may get into trouble; and what would you do *then*?' Ah, what indeed!

As to the floating tube-tunnel, actually midway in the water between the surface and the bottom, we find nothing new to record. Engineers and projectors have not taken kindly to this idea. It will be remembered that Mr J. F. Smith's plan was for a wrought-iron tube at a level of thirty or forty feet below the surface of the water. The diameter of the tunnel and the thickness of its metal would be so adjusted that it would float. Mooring chains and anchors would prevent it from bobbing upwards. Masonry piers, a mile or more apart, would embrace it on the two sides; while cross rods from pier to pier of each pair would confine the tube at top and bottom. The tube would be made in lengths of a hundred feet each, floated out, sunk, and joined air-tight. Some kind of corkscrew staircase would afford access to the tube on the English and French shores, and the happy passengers would descend to their railway carriages in the tube. Considering how easily such a floating tube might come to grief, and what irreparable loss it would be if the sea were to make an irruption, we need not marvel that this particular mode of crossing the Channel has not met with many advocates.

We will dismiss the fifth level, or bridge scheme,

\* Chambers's Journal, September 8, 1863.

in a few words, because few persons look at it as at all feasible. There has been one plan for an iron tunnel or railway tube, supported at a sufficient height above the water upon four hundred stone piers; other plans for a continuous bridge or viaduct, with drawbridge openings or pivot bridges for the passage of ships; and others for a high-level bridge, under which ships could pass through arched or square-topped openings. M. Boutet, a French engineer, has recently broached a plan whereby he believes he could span openings of three hundred feet from pier to pier. But any bridge twenty miles long would be of immense cost and difficulty; while so many piers would be dangerous to ships at night and in stormy weather.

Let us come to the schemes relating to the level of the sea itself. Something that might be called a steam floating bridge has often engaged the attention of engineers, and is now the favourite idea of Mr Fowler in his plan for improving the Channel passage. Such a bridge is in effect a large long flat steam-boat, with facilities for accurately adjusting its departure and arrival points on shore. The idea is not now started for the first time. A few years ago, Mr Chinie proposed an arrangement, in which the towers were to be built in the sea, at a short distance from the shores of England and France. An embankment was to be built from the towers to each mainland, to the level of the existing railways. A railway train, going (say) from England to France, would run along the South-eastern Railway, then along the embankment, and so to the top of the tower. Here it would be received on a platform, and would be lowered by hydraulic power nearly to the level of the sea, a greater or less descent according to the state of the tide. A long flat steam-ship or raft would receive the train, and would convey it across the Channel to the French coast; where a reversed series of similar operations would raise the train by hydraulic power to the top of a tower, ready to run along an embankment to a junction with the French railways. About two years ago, a scheme by Mr Daft, on some such plan as this, occupied its due portion of attention. He had long before patented a sort of monster-raft or ferry-boat for ocean navigation; and he proposed to modify the idea for the Channel ferry. The vessel was to consist of two long quadrangular hulks, a little distance apart, decked over, and bridged one to the other; broad paddle-wheels would rotate in the space between them; and lines of rail on deck would receive railway trains. What sort of dock would be required for such a huge double ship, and what would be the sailing or rather steaming qualities of the monster, we could not venture to say. Mr Grantham, who is learned on the subject of iron ships, proposes a steel vessel four hundred feet in length, with such a shallow draught as to accommodate itself to existing harbours; it would have a cellular structure at bottom, with good cabin accommodation above. The steamer would draw up by the side of a pier or quay, close (say) to the South-eastern Railway; and the passengers would pass along a few feet on a level, from the one to the other, by a peculiar adjustment of gangways, according to the height of the tide. Luggage-vans would be lifted on board by cranes, without disturbing the luggage; but as regards the passenger-trains, they would not go on board. Mr Gran-

tham contends that this would be the cheapest and most practicable of all the plans. Mr Bridges Adams has conceived the idea of two monster rafts, side by side, one to receive a goods-train, and one a passenger-train, with some kind of central-paddle or double-screw propeller; and Mr Gallo-way has suggested something similar, but on a smaller scale. But let us look a little more closely at the train-ferry method.

Mr Fowler, engineer of the Underground railways, has explained all the details of this plan with remarkable clearness. He proposes to start from Dover, and to run his gigantic steam ferry across to near Cape Grisnez. His purpose is, to construct new and well-sheltered harbours on both coasts, and to make the passage with large and admirably contrived steamers. Westward of the existing Admiralty pier at Dover will be a new pier, according to Mr Fowler's plan; and between the two will be a harbour sheltered from every wind, expressly for the ferry service. Two short connecting-links will bring the South-eastern Railway and the Chatham and Dover Railway to the same quay at the side of this harbour. The new harbour will be of sufficient depth at all states of the tide. There will be a graving-dock, a covered berth for the steamers, and hydraulic apparatus for raising and lowering the trains. So much for the English side. On the French side, there will be more difficulty. Calais is exposed to many adverse winds, and the harbour is much choked with sand; while Boulogne has these or other disadvantages in about equal degree. Mr Fowler has consequently selected a spot on the coast between the two, near the village of Andre-celles, where there is deep water, no sand, and good shelter from north and east winds. A harbour (the approval and assistance of the French government being first obtained) will be constructed at that spot, with the same kind of quays, graving-dock, covered berth, and hydraulic machinery, as at Dover. Small curved branches will connect the quay with the system of railways running to Paris on the one hand, and to Belgium on the other. The arrangement, when completed, would shorten the railway distance from London to Paris by about fourteen miles, and the sea distance by two miles. The saving of time, owing to circumstances presently to be explained, would be very nearly two hours.

So much for works on land; and now for the ferry-boats (if so humble a name can be given to such large and powerful steamers) in which the passage is to be made. They will be no less than four hundred and fifty feet long—the largest ships in the world except the *Great Eastern*; nearly sixty feet beam, and more than eighty-five feet across the paddle-boxes. Two complete railway trains, one for passengers, and one for goods, can be accommodated on board each ship, by a most ingenious arrangement. The stem and stern will be made to open, to admit the entrance and exit of trains of carriages and wagons. The passenger-train will run upon a platform occupying the whole length of the vessel, on its main deck, and protected from the weather overhead by the upper deck. The goods-train will descend an incline to a lower platform, just under the passenger-train. Dining saloons, ladies' cabins, smoking-rooms, custom-house rooms, &c., will be situated on the main deck, on either side of the platform on which



the passenger-train rests. By this most convenient arrangement, passengers may either remain in the carriages; or (as most of them would assuredly do) may alight, and take their ease in the saloons during the sea-passage—supping, breakfasting, dining, or otherwise refreshing the inner man before resuming their journey on French ground. The idea is, that the entire voyage from coast to coast shall be made in about an hour; and the constructional and steaming qualities of the vessel are to be conducive to this end. As it is part of the bargain (in which Neptune is supposed to be concerned) that there is to be scarcely any pitching or rolling, nothing is likely to prevent the big ferry-ship from making a rapid transit. The passengers would secure the self-same seats in the self-same carriages all the way from London to Paris. The luggage and the mails, also, would be undisturbed. It is in this saving of time, by avoiding the necessity of transshipping passengers, luggage, and mails, that the shortening of the journey will mostly be effected. The rails on the quay, on the hydraulic hoist, and on the platforms in the ship, will, of course, be on the same gauge, and will be properly connected by points, sidings, &c. At high-water, the passenger platform in the ship will be about on a level with the quay; at other states of the tide, a descent of the hydraulic hoist will easily accommodate itself to the difference in level. Marine engines of first-rate character, and all the best appliances of machinery, are, of course, to be looked for; if done at all, the thing must be done well. Admiral Ommaney has so far endorsed this plan, as to indicate what the size of the great steam ferry-ship might be, according to the depth of water which the harbours would accommodate—four hundred feet long with a draught of thirteen feet, three hundred and fifty with one of ten feet, and three hundred with one of seven feet.

After all, something more modest than any of these costly undertakings may possibly be decided on. Captain Tyler, who examined into the matter last year, at the request of the government, while declining to express a decided opinion as to which of the schemes is actually the best, suggested that we should for the present make the most of what we have got. He advises the two governments to make such improvements in the harbours of the two coasts as to admit steamers of greater draught than those now running across the Channel—steamers that would travel more quickly and roll much less. Other people shake their wise heads at this, and say that Calais and Boulogne are almost hopeless as harbours, even if Dover were all or nearly all that it ought to be. Mr Grantham, as we have seen, has a plan for utilising the present harbours, by building steamers drawing less than seven feet of water; they would have a rudder at each end, and a steering-apparatus on the paddle-box platform. Such a vessel, he thinks, by going either end foremost, would require no turning; while its shallow draught would enable it to enter Folkestone and Boulogne harbours at all states of the tide.

The matter will not be permitted to die out, now that the public has begun to take a genuine interest in it. No one can gainsay the truth of a remark made by Captain Tyler, that 'not unfrequently the traveller from India, or from America, finds the British Channel the most unpleasant part of his

journey; and he sometimes looks forward with more anxiety to the state of the Channel than to the heat of the Red Sea or the passage of the Atlantic.' We *must* improve the Channel passage; and that is the truth of the matter.

#### NED SPRUCINGTON'S UMBRELLA.

'NAME?'

'Charles Blank.'

'Occupation?'

'Civil engineer.'

'Address?'

'501 Great George Street, Westminster, and 6 Verbena Villas, Hammersmith.'

'Verbena Villas, Hammersmith,' slowly repeated the police sergeant, as he entered the foregoing particulars in a big book. 'Well, you know the charge—stealing this gentleman's umbrella. Have you anything to say in addition to what you have already stated?'

'Nothing whatever,' I answered: 'I can only repeat that it was entirely a mistake upon my part.'

'Just so,' was the grim reply. 'You'll have an opportunity of proving that in the morning. You are by no means the first person we have had to deal with here who has mistaken other people's property for his own.—Take him to the cells.' And then I was marched off.

The circumstances which had brought me into this scrape were as follow. Myself and my friend Sprucington were in the employment of a railway contractor, whose offices were situated in the locality already mentioned. The duties of our department were shared by some half-dozen other young gentlemen of our own age, who, like us, were qualifying themselves for the survey of ground and construction of lines in any part of the world which their genius should call them to. But plans and specifications are not particularly exhilarating in themselves, apart from their professional interest; so it is not to be wondered at, that among several young fellows, full of animal spirits, a little practical joking should have been at times indulged in.

Ned Sprucington and I were old Carthusians. When we met, therefore, after some years' separation, at the office in George Street, we had only to renew our friendship. The great dandy of our room, nay, of the entire house, was Ned. I honestly believe, too, that he was one of the most guileless, simple-hearted fellows alive. He had, however, one conspicuous weakness—which was to be taken for a man of fashion. He dressed, I admit, unexceptionably; and to aid him in producing the impression which he desired upon beholders, he carried about with him, in all weathers, a beautiful silk umbrella, scarcely bulkier than a lady's parasol, though, of course, considerably longer. Judging from the cut onyx handle, mounted in gold, it must have cost him a mint of money.

Well, this umbrella of Ned's we tried all we could think of to get hold of. But he was too wary for us—it was always left in some safe place. If we had succeeded in gaining possession of it, it would at once have taken a conspicuous position in society, such as covering the old apple-woman at the corner, but it was unapproachable. At last we became so desperate that I accepted a heavy wager from one of the other fellows that I would present myself at the office the next

morning, at all hazards, the proud possessor of Ned Sprucington's umbrella.

On that particular day, work being slack, every one was enabled to leave unusually early; so that by four o'clock in the afternoon the house was cleared of all save myself, my brother-conspirator, and the old soldier who lived with his wife on the premises. My friend Ned, as was his custom at such times, had announced his intention of promenading the Ladies' Mile, there to air himself, his aristocracy, and—his umbrella. I decided upon following him thither. As there were yet two hours of daylight, however, I thought I could not do better than fortify myself for the enterprise by taking some substantial refreshment before commencing operations. After which, I would trust to the chapter of accidents.

With this object in view, I was repairing towards my favourite place of refectory in the Strand, when who should I see looking in at the topographer's shop by Northumberland House but Ned Sprucington! He ought, by rights, to have been nearly two miles away at Hyde Park Corner; yet here was he at Charing Cross, calmly studying some map of a 'seat of war!' He was so wedged in among other gazers, that I could not get at him to speak or even to have a clear view of his face. But I knew him by his height, by the neatly braided coat, the delicately tinted trousers, the well-poised hat, and last but not least, the umbrella. He was holding his hands behind his back, and in one of them the precious article was firmly clasped. Yes, there it was, onyx handle, gold mounting, and all. As I looked, a sudden idea took possession of me—a foolish idea, I admit, as it could hardly lead to a practical result. But I thought if I could only get the umbrella out of his hand in some way, and run off with it, that he, seeing it in the possession of a friend, would give up the chase, knowing that he would recover his property the next day. At the worst, the result would only be a day or two's coolness between us, on account of my freak.

No sooner thought than done. On the pavement, I espied a piece of clean straw, well adapted for the purpose I had in view. Picking it up, I proceeded to tickle with it Sprucington's right ear. The experiment answered admirably. Thinking it, I suppose, to be a troublesome fly, he raised his hand to brush off the assailant. But to do this, he was compelled to shift the umbrella from his right hand to his left. The moment of the transference was enough for me. Before the fingers of his left hand could close, I had seized the umbrella, and the next moment was dashing madly across Trafalgar Square in the direction of the Haymarket.

There was a sudden commotion behind me, a commotion which soon swelled into an uproar; I heeded it no further than to turn half round, in order to let Sprucington see who I was, and to flourish in the air my umbrella—I mean *his* umbrella. But the uproar did not relax; on the contrary, it began to shape itself into words. Hoarse shouts of 'Stop thief!' followed me as I flew up the steps at the further end of the square. The cries still ringing in my ears, I dashed helter-skelter past the College of Physicians and Colnaghi's print-shop till I came to the corner of Suffolk Street. Here I was brought up 'all standing' by an iron gripe upon the collar from

behind. Turning round, I found myself in the custody of a policeman.

In the usual brief space of time, the inevitable London crowd assembled about us. I was regarded with curiosity, loaded with reproaches, and favoured with wit of an extremely personal nature, all at the same moment. This I bore with patience, if not with good-humour, convinced that on the arrival of Sprucington I should get clear of my tormentors. Presently a lane was made for the approach of the owner of the stolen property. Judge of my horror on perceiving that the panting individual who made his appearance was a total stranger to me!

Of course, all my protestations of innocence were of no avail, and I was treated in the manner described in the commencement.

Clatter, clash, rumble, bang! The cell door closed upon me, and I was a prisoner.

The gloom was so great, that though it was daylight, I could at first distinguish nothing. Gradually I became aware that I was in a narrow vaulted room, as strong as brick and iron could make it. Half way up the walls was a wooden wainscoting, and round two sides I could dimly see a low bench, barely two feet from a floor which was inch deep in sawdust. The iron door of this delightful apartment was of great thickness, disclosing—about five feet from the ground—a small grating of round holes. By pressing my face against this grating, I could see into the corridor without. But the only view obtainable was a ground-glass window opposite, illuminated by the last lingering rays of the setting sun. It was altogether a most depressing place. The flavour suggested to me was a combined one, made up of the condemned cell in Newgate, the dungeons of the Bastille, and the Spanish Inquisition. Occasional gruff voices and heavy footsteps in the corridor deepened the impression. A mouse in a trap was a king to me.

Then I began to think seriously of my situation. That I had committed felony there could not be the least doubt, though with no felonious intention. Would the magistrate believe my explanation? Surely my manner and appearance were not those of a pick— But my heart sank within me as I remembered that the London swell-mob are known to be the cleverest actors in the world—in fact, can imitate to perfection any class of society. My only hope was in Sprucington. He would be of material assistance in clearing up the mystery. And yet that umbrella—I could have sworn it to belong to none other but he! However, I had despatched messengers to him, my employer, and my friends; therefore, the only thing to be done was to wait patiently till the morning.

I spare you a description of that night of horror, for such it was to one who had never before suffered an hour's deprivation of liberty: how the monotony of the long, long hours was only broken at intervals by the appearance at the grating of a stern, helmeted visage, demanding whether 'all' was 'right'—how at four o'clock A.M. two fellow-prisoners, in the shapes of a drunken scavenger and a deserter from the Royal Artillery, were thrust into the cell; or how in the morning all the cells were emptied, and we, the occupants, with aching bones, unwashed and unkempt, were paraded through the streets in a melancholy string, to an adjacent police court.

Fortunately, my case came on early, so that I

had not long to wait among the crowd of dirty, disreputable *détenus*, each guarded by a constable, who filled an outer room.

At the cry of 'Charles Blank !' (I shuddered to hear my name in such a place), I and my attendant policeman marched into the court. The jailer, a big, burly, bald-headed, gilt-buttoned person, placed me in the dock. At the same moment the prosecutor entered the witness-box to be sworn. He was a priggish-looking man of about forty-five, and no more like Ned Sprucington *in front* than I was like the Monument.

In a few calm, well-chosen words, he described the whole occurrence. When he had finished, I was told that I could put any questions to him that I thought proper. I declined to do so. Then, after his evidence had been confirmed by the constable who arrested me, the magistrate—an amiable-looking old gentleman—asked me : 'Well, my friend, what have you to say to this ?'

In reply, I gave the same simple and unvarnished statement which I had already given at the police station.

'That is all very well, as far as it goes ; but have you any witnesses to character ?'

'Yes, sir—Mr Edward Sprucington.'

'Call Edward Sprucington.'

Then I could hear the crier shouting the familiar name through the passages of the court.

After a few minutes' suspense the official returned, accompanied, to my great delight, by Ned. The good fellow looked so distressed to see me in such a predicament, that I felt convinced he would have given a dozen umbrellas to have got me out of the scrape. As soon as he made his appearance, I noticed that the prosecutor changed colour ; I also noticed that while taking the oath, Ned kept one hand behind his back : I could not have told you why, but somehow I derived encouragement from both those trifling circumstances.

To shorten matters, I may say, that if I had been a seraph I could not have received a better character than that given me by Ned. At last came the question : 'Then you think the prisoner incapable of stealing this umbrella ?'

'Well, sir,' said Ned, who had recovered his self-possession, 'if, as I understand, stealing means taking property from the *owner*, it is impossible the prisoner could have committed the theft.'

What a first-rate advocate Ned was becoming !

'Impossible ! Why ?'

'Because that umbrella was first stolen from me !'

'It is an infamous falsehood !' cried the prosecutor, starting up.

'Is it ?' replied Ned. 'That person need not be so particular about words, for this is all he left me in exchange—at the Cigar Divan.'

With that he produced, amid the laughter of the court, what he had hitherto concealed behind his back, namely, a wooden-handled umbrella much the worse for wear, of silk certainly, but no more to be compared with the glories of the onyx-handled, than a costermonger's wideawake with the Archbishop of Canterbury's best 'shovel.'

An attempt at bluster by the late possessor of his umbrella was quietly met by Ned with a request that an officer of the court should examine the initials upon the handle. This was conclusive. The stranger's initials were 'T. W.,' and he had not had time to take notice of the minute 'E. S.' cut into the onyx stone.

Of course my immediate release followed upon this discovery, accompanied by the assurance that I left that court without any stain upon my character, &c. My late prosecutor was glad to slink crestfallen away, yet not before he had received a severe rebuke, administered by the magistrate.

As for Ned, he was overflowing with gratitude. He declared with tears in his eyes that I had been the means of restoring to him his lost treasure. What was more, he insisted upon paying the wager which I had lost, and also of performing the part of Amphitryon at a capital dinner in the evening.

### OUR DRIVERS.

In the commercial or working world of to-day, when we cannot tell the banker's porter from the banker, the butler from his master the peer, there are few classes so markedly distinguished from all others, so little prone to fuse and mix with them, as the drivers and firemen of our railways. Even the least experienced reader would have little difficulty in pointing out the railway-man when in his plain clothes, for they have an air quite as proper to themselves as a sailor's ; and, indeed, are not without some resemblance to those who follow the sea. Exposure to the weather, especially when it is remembered that they are always running against the wind, accounts, of course, for the bronzed look the majority of them wear ; exposure, by the way, which is, to a great degree, quite needless, as they could, and ought to be much more sheltered than they are. All but the very strongest constitutions break down in the first year or two of their career ; those who succeed in working through all the stages of firemen, pilot-men, goods-drivers, and passenger-drivers, are possessed of constitutions tough beyond those of ordinary mortals.

It will surprise many persons to know the great length of time a driver will 'run.' The man who opened the Great Western Railway in 1837 is still in the service, and has only recently been promoted to a higher position ; while his brother, who joined the line very soon after him, has driven an engine ever since, and still ranks as one of the very best and most efficient drivers in the service. On other railways, many more examples could be given ; indeed, after a certain time, the men seem to become indurated, and do not change in aspect or competency for many years. One old hand assured me that he had never been wet through in his life on his engine, although he had been running so long ; the reason he assigned was, that as they always ran so fast that they met the wind, the lofty fire-box sheltered them. This was probably the case so far as to prevent him from getting a sudden and complete drenching, which was what he meant ; but the men must of necessity become damp, and remain so all day ; and, as they stand upon a warm plate of iron, nothing is more calculated to induce rheumatism, which is their chief curse.

A passenger-driver serves a longer apprenticeship, to attain his position, than any handicraftsman

in the kingdom. Few imagine that a youth, beginning now his career as cleaner, can scarcely hope to become a first-rate passenger-driver under twenty years, during the whole of which time he would be preparing himself for the post. A young man commonly serves four or five years as cleaner, and then three years as goods-fireman; five years is by no means an unusual time to serve as passenger-fireman now-a-days; then a shorter time, say two years, as pilot-man, or 'engine-turner'—the latter title is given to those men who have to arrange and shift the engines in the sheds, so as to be ready in due order for their various journeys; and then he will serve a very long time as goods-driver. I used the expression 'now-a-days,' because, early in railway history, promotion was much more rapid, and men frequently ran through the grades in a third of the time now demanded. At present, the railway world is glutted with drivers and firemen, as it is with mechanics and engineers of a higher class. A lucky accident will sometimes shorten a driver's probation even now; and I am reminded of a case which is very much to the point. An engine left standing at a station was 'thrown out of gear,' as it is called—that is, its machinery was so purposely deranged, that it could not move in either direction; but from this having been imperfectly done, it at last got under way, very slowly at first; but the regulator being jerked open, it soon attained a terrible speed, which was all the more alarming as it had started on the down-line, and was running towards London. The effect of this, of course, would be that it must, sooner or later, run headlong into the first down-train, and there seemed no possibility of averting a more awful accident than had ever yet taken place. A ballast-driver, however (one who has charge of the train of earth-trucks which convey the material for making the lofty parts of new lines, and also remove the soil from cuttings), saw the engine running without a driver; and, with wonderful nerve, left his siding, and at full speed dashed after the flying locomotive. This was desperately hazardous, for, had they encountered a train, he would not only have been killed, but, by the presence of his engine, would have rendered the inevitable accident more fearful—the reader, of course, understands that he too was running 'up' on the 'down'-line. However, he caught the runaway; and leaping from his own engine on to the tender, he reversed both engines, and ran back to the station—some six miles—as swiftly as he could, arriving there safely, just in advance of a passenger-train. For this he was made a passenger-driver. His courage deserves that his name should be given, but I refrain, because I am obliged to add that his story has an unfortunate sequel; he was dismissed for drunkenness—an offence which is necessarily visited very severely on railways.

The benefit of promotion from a goods to a passenger driver is of a double kind; the wages are better, and the duties are lighter. On most lines, the wages do not alter on promotion; but it comes to the same thing, as they only select men high up in the scale, so that passenger-men average much more than goods-men. There is no way of reckoning with any certainty on the time that the driver of a luggage-train may be employed on his trip; but a passenger-man, as we all know, has to be very exact. The highest rate of wages

received by first-class drivers is eight shillings per day. When this rate is paid, the men do not receive 'premiums;' when premiums are given for good behaviour throughout the year, they usually consist of ten pounds per man, and then the wages do not run higher than seven shillings and sixpence per day. This is very good pay, and, owing to the resolute character of the men, and their well compacted organisation, it is not likely to be lower for a long time. A strike of drivers and firemen is a very serious thing to encounter, and under one plea or another, railway authorities have pretty generally managed with a good grace to give way, rather than incur this evil; so let the candidates for employment be ever so numerous—and they are at this moment in excess of the demand—the class I am writing of will remain a select guild, and a well-paid one. But all candidates are not equally eligible. Even those men who have toiled through all the grades, and acquired all the experience which time and practice can give, will suddenly discover a want of nerve when placed in charge of a passenger-train, and prove unable to keep time, or, in plainer words, drive fast enough. This is very curious, for all these men must of necessity have passed years in 'firing' on the very trains they are now set to drive. I have known at least three instances of old hands, of good character, being unable to drive passenger-trains; and I shall watch with some interest the career of the men on the Metropolitan Railway, where all the trains are passenger, and where the young hands cannot have had any experience on slow goods-trains. The Metropolitan Railway has, it is asserted, more engines in proportion to its mileage than any railway in the world. There are now forty-five at work in its narrow area, besides many belonging to companies which run over it.

Connected with this question of nerve or 'pluck' is the fact, that on most lines of any considerable extent you will find a man called 'Hell-fire Jack;' but this is usually a self-dubbed title—in short, a piece of vanity. No distinction as to dash or skill characterises these men; in fact, the very best drivers are usually the very quietest. A man is running at this moment as first-class driver on one of our chief lines, and has for many years done so, without the slightest accident, who takes his turn as a local Wesleyan preacher. Several of his comrades are men of very strong religious views, and as different to the popular notion of a dashing engineman as possible.

Most drivers save money, and many of them speculate in railway shares with it. This latter feature is not quite so common as of old, so few new lines being now projected. Nevertheless, a prosperous driver of any standing will generally be found to hold shares in at least one railway. Another of their customs is grown familiar to their patrons, and travellers now look for the beard and moustache as a regular characteristic in the engineman; and yet, such is the force of prejudice, that a very few years ago any driver or fireman who persisted in wearing either, ran the risk, in most companies, of dismissal for doing so. The men give almost unanimous testimony to the benefit they derive, especially in winter, from not shaving; and other evidence shows that affections of the throat and chest have been less common among them since they have worn the beard.



The drivers are very conservative in their habits as regards any festival or commemoration, and they will probably decorate their engines on May Day and 'Royal Oak' day, after every other class has ceased to observe those anniversaries. Their privileges they also jealously guard, and in vain does any engineer seek by the most subtle means to deprive them of any right, or substitute a privilege of inferior value. As a proof of this may be adduced the fact, that on every main line, so far as I know, the men have always insisted on reckoning their work by miles, and not by time, one hundred and fifty miles being universally recognised as a day's work, all above that distance being paid for as extra; but if, in running this distance, they are occupied more than ten hours, then they demand to be paid for all time above. This secures them from being kept on duty an inordinate time, if they are paid by miles, or from running exhausting journeys, if paid by time. Their sturdiness in maintaining these customs, and their utter fearlessness in confronting their superiors, however high these may be, is wonderful; totally free from anything like insolence, but equally free from anything like cringing.

It is this spirit, doubtless, which makes them so successful in keeping up their wages; and, as a less pleasant feature, it is this which makes them, as a rule, so harsh to their firemen. 'It must not be supposed that the driver treats his fireman, the like of whom he was himself but a little while before, and who will be as high as himself in time, as his equal; very far from it. Any attempt at intimacy on the younger man's side would be treated as an impertinence. The fireman's work is harder than might be imagined; the mere labour of replenishing the fire-box on a long journey, especially of a goods-engine, is no light task, as one of these monsters will consume in a single trip seven or eight tons of fuel; while the frequent using of the brake, with the weight of an immense train pressing behind, tries the arms of the strongest. It may be noticed here that locomotive-men have some of the best sick and superannuation clubs that have ever been established; and owing to the facility of communication from line to line, their expenses in working these societies are reduced to a minimum. One excellent provision which is common among them is the paying a member one hundred or fifty pounds, according to his class, on his becoming unable to work on an engine, no matter what his age, or however fitted for other employment he may be.

Driving an engine is not so simple a thing now, owing to the complexity of the signals, as it was thirty years ago. Then, a simple cross-bar shewed 'stop,' and a disc was 'all right;' but now, when half-a-dozen companies are running over the same line, the signals are so numerous, that special learning is required for different sections. It is infinitely to the credit of the men, drivers and switchmen, that so few accidents occur. Most drivers, however, in the course of their experience have met with one or two narrow escapes, and I will conclude with an instance which has always appeared to me as being the very narrowest escape on record. More than five-and-twenty years ago, as a passenger-train was running at full speed on one of our best known main lines, the engine came in contact with a horse-box which was being shunted

across the rails, and the force of the collision knocked the ponderous vehicle upwards—no uncommon thing in a collision, by-the-bye. The horse-box was knocked upwards, and the engine flew under it, striking it with its chimney; the chimney was swept off, so was the safety-valve, which is on the top of every fire-box; the horse-box hurtled over the heads of the driver and fireman, and fell where the tender and first carriage were coupled. A terrible accident was the result. The driver and fireman were quite unhurt, and the former is running on the same line unto this day.

## SOCIETY VERSES.

JUST as there are certain dishes excellent in themselves, but which are not attractive to the common palate, so there are books that have little attraction for the world at large, and yet which to the intellectual epicure are great treats. Moreover, there are some books which require for their due appreciation that the reader should even be in a certain elevated sphere of society, or, at all events, should be acquainted with it. This is a drawback, of course, and argues in a writer want of breadth, and perhaps of depth; but there are some very great authors who come under this condemnation. Thackeray, himself, for instance, can never be properly understood by persons unacquainted with town and club life; he can never become a household word among the humble. It is also improbable that even a scholar, if he has always been a *very poor man*, will have a proper admiration for Horace. Both these writers, great as they are, appeal in almost all they have written to the sympathies of a class. Leigh Hunt, again, though by no means a writer of the silver-fork school, demands of his readers a certain daintiness of taste, akin to his own; and Longfellow has more numerous admirers among the ladies than among men. It is little disparagement to a writer that he cannot please everybody. No man but Shakespeare is equal to such a task; and if an author make himself thoroughly understood and appreciated by ever so small a circle, he has performed a very creditable feat. Thus, though Mr Frederick Locker in his *London Lyrics* \* addresses but a limited audience—for it is not his expectation to carry all London—he has accomplished much, for he has thoroughly succeeded in pleasing them; and if the hands that applaud him are all gloved in the best kid, it must be remembered that those are not the hands most easily moved to applause. If he is not so good a writer of Society Verses as Præd, he is better than Spenser (the Hon. William, not the author of the *Faery Queen*); and both these authors were in their day deservedly at the head of their professions. Indeed, in one instance, Mr Locker has shown himself equal to any poet of his class, for surely there was never a brighter piece of patch-work—made up of pathos, gaiety, and quaint turns—than the following:

TO MY GRANDMOTHER.

(SUGGESTED BY A PICTURE BY MR BONNEY.)

This relative of mine  
Was she seventy and nine  
When she died?

\* *London Lyrics*. By Frederick Locker. Strahan & Co.

By the canvas may be seen,  
How she looked at seventeen,  
As a bride.

Beneath a summer tree  
Her maiden reverie  
Has a charm;  
Her ringlets are in taste;  
What an arm! and what a waist  
For an arm!

With her bridal-wreath, bouquet,  
Lace, farthingale, and gay  
*Falbalà*,  
—Were Romney's limning true,  
What a lucky dog were you,  
Grandpapa!

Her lips are sweet as love;  
They are parting! Do they move?  
Are they dumb?  
Her eyes are blue, and beam  
Beseechingly, and seem  
To say: 'Come.'

What funny fancy slips  
From between these cherry lips?  
Whisper me,  
Sweet deity in paint,  
What canon says I mayn't  
Marry thee?

That good-for-nothing Time  
Has a confidence sublime!  
When I first  
Saw this lady, in my youth,  
Her winters had, forsooth,  
Done their worst.

Her locks, as white as snow,  
Once shamed the swarthy crow:  
By-and-by,  
That fowl's avenging sprite  
Set his cruel foot for spite  
Near her eye.

Her rounded form was lean,  
And her silk was bombazine:  
Well I wot,  
With her needles would she sit,  
And for hours would she knit—  
Would she not?

Ah, perishable clay!  
Her charms had dropt away  
One by one:  
But if she heaved a sigh  
With a burthen, it was: 'Thy  
Will be done.'

In travail, as in tears,  
With the fardel of her years  
Overprest—  
In mercy she was borne  
Where the weary and the worn  
Are at rest.

I fain would meet you there;  
If witching as you were,  
Grandmamma,  
This nether world agrees  
That the better you must please  
Grandpapa.

In the above poem our author is quite himself: he imitates nobody, or, if there be something of Sir John Suckling's style about it, it is better than Suckling's. The very metre, although not, of

course, original, is rare, and suits him to a nicety: he uses it again almost as successfully in

#### MY MISTRESS'S BOOTS.

They nearly strike me dumb,  
And I tremble when they come  
Pit-a-pat:  
This palpitation means  
That these Boots are Geraldine's—  
Think of that!

O where did hunter win  
So delectable a skin  
For her feet?  
You lucky little kid,  
You perished, so you did,  
For my sweet!

The fairy stitching gleams  
On the sides, and in the seams,  
And it shews  
That the Pixies were the wags  
Who tipt these funny tags,  
And these toes.

The simpletons who squeeze  
Their extremities to please  
Mandarins,  
Would positively flinch  
From venturing to pinch  
Geraldine's.

What soles to charm an elf!  
Had Crusoe, sick of self,  
Chanced to view  
One printed near the tide,  
O how hard he would have tried  
For the two!

For Gerry's debonair,  
And innocent, and fair  
As a rose:  
She's an angel in a frock,  
With a fascinating cock  
To her nose.

Cinderella's *lefts and rights*  
To Geraldine's were frights:  
And, I trow,  
The damsel, delfty shod,  
Has dutifully trod  
Until now.

Come, Gerry, since it suits  
Such a pretty Puss (in Boots)  
These to don,  
Set this dainty hand awhile  
On my shoulder, dear, and I'll  
Put them on.

Geraldine is Mr Locker's name for his 'beloved object'; its music pleases him; and the association of so noble a title with jokes and fun, doubtless tickled his fancy, as it tickles ours.

At Worthing an exile from Geraldine G.,  
How aimless, how wretched an exile is he!  
Promenades are not even prunella and leather  
To lovers, if lovers can't foot them together.

He flies the parade; by ocean he stands;  
He traces a 'Geraldine G.' on the sands;  
Only 'G.'! though her loved patronymic is 'Green'—  
I will not betray thee, my own Geraldine.

The fortunes of men have a time and a tide,  
And Fate, the old Fury, will not be denied;

That name was, of course, soon wiped out by  
the sea—  
She jilted the exile, did Geraldine G.

They meet, but they never have spoken since that;  
He hopes she is happy—he knows she is fat;  
*She* wooed on the shore, now is wed in the Strand—  
And *I*—it was I wrote her name on the sand.

The subject of 'Old Letters' has always been a favourite one with modern writers, as it would doubtless have been with ancient ones, had they possessed it; but nobody seems to have stored up papyrus as we store note-paper; and as for tablets, it is said that even the most sentimental among the ancients sacrificed romance to economy, and used their *billets-doux* again for ordinary correspondence. Memoranda of the days in which their bills fell due, or of their bets on chariot-races, were written on the self-same page that had borne Lydia's tender promises and protestations. It is no discredit, therefore, to ancient literature that it affords no parallel to Thackeray's famous sermon on his favourite text, beginning, 'Perhaps there are no better satires in the world than old letters;' or to Tennyson's glorious poem in the *In Memoriam*, beginning, 'By night we lingered on the lawn.' Mr Locker's treatment of the matter differs from either author, and yet has touches of them both:

#### OLD LETTERS.

Old letters! wipe away the tear  
For vows and wishes vainly worded;  
A pilgrim finds his journal here  
Since first his youthful loins were girded.

Yes, here are wails from Clapham Grove;  
How could philosophy expect us  
To live with Dr Wise, and love  
Rice pudding and the Greek Delectus?

How strange to commune with the Dead!  
Dead joys, dead loves—and wishes thwarted;  
Here's cruel proof of friendships fled;  
And sad enough of friends departed.

Yes, here's the offer that I wrote  
In '33 to Lucy Diver;  
And here John Wylie's begging note—  
He never paid me back a stiver.

And here my feud with Major Spike,  
Our bet about the French invasion;  
I must confess I acted like  
A donkey upon that occasion.

Here's news from Paternoster Row;  
How mad I was when first I learnt it!  
They would not take my Book, and now  
I'd give a trifle to have burnt it.

A ghastly bill! 'I disapprove.'  
And yet She helped me to defray it:  
What tokens of a mother's love!  
O bitter thought! I can't repay it.

And here's a score of notes at last,  
With 'love' and 'dove,' and 'sever' 'never'—  
Though hope, though passion may be past,  
Their perfume is as sweet as ever.

A human heart should beat for two,  
Despite the taunt of single scorners;  
And all the hearths I ever knew  
Had got a pair of chimney-corners.

See here a double violet—  
Two locks of hair—a deal of scandal;  
I'll burn what only leaves regret—  
Go, Betty, bring a lighted candle.

The form and manner of the above verse is *Praed's*; and *Praed* (in the *Belle of the Ball*) has proved his master in the treatment of a similar topic. Where Mr Locker has, however, apparently matched himself designedly against *Praed*—and has come off with credit—is in the poem called *St James's Street*—

*St James's Street*, of classic fame!  
The finest people throng it!  
*St James's Street*? I know the name,  
I think I've passed along it.  
Why, that's where *Sacharissa* sighed  
When *Waller* read his ditty;  
Where *Byron* lived, and *Gibbon* died,  
And *Alvanley* was witty.

A noted street. It skirts the Park  
Where *Pepys* once took his pastime;  
Come, gaze on fifty men of mark,  
And then recall the fast time!  
The *plats* at *White's*, the play at *Crock's*,  
The bumpers to *Miss Gunning*;  
The *bonhomie* of *Charlie Fox*,  
And *Selwyn's* ghastly funning.

The dear old street of clubs and cribs,  
As north and south it stretches,  
Still seems to smack of *Rolliad* squibs,  
And *Gillray's* fiercer sketches;  
The quaint old dress, the grand old style,  
The *mots*, the racy stories;  
The wine, the dice, the wit, the bile,  
The hate of Whigs and Tories.

At dusk, when I am strolling there,  
Dim forms will rise around me;  
*Lepel* flits past me in her chair,  
And *Congreve's* airs astound me!  
And once *Nell Gwynne*, a frail young sprite,  
Looked kindly when I met her;  
I shook my head, perhaps—but quite  
Forgot to quite forget her.

The street is still a lively tomb  
For rich, and gay, and clever;  
The crops of dandies bud, and bloom,  
And die as fast as ever.  
Now gilded youth loves cutty pipes,  
And slang the worse for wearing;  
It can't approach its prototypes  
In taste, or tone, or bearing.

In *Brummell's* day of buckle shoes,  
Starch cravats, and roll collars,  
They'd fight, and woo, and bet—and lose  
Like gentlemen and scholars:  
I like young men to go the pace,  
I half forgive old *Rapid*;  
These louts disgrace their name and race—  
So vicious and so vapid!

Worse times may come. *Bon ton*, indeed,  
Will then be quite forgotten,  
And all we much revere will speed  
From ripe to worse than rotten;  
Then grass will sprout between yon stones,  
And owls will roost at *Boodle's*,  
And *Echo* will hurl back the tones  
Of screaming Yankee Doodles.

I like the haunts of old Cockaigne,  
Where wit and wealth were squandered,  
The halls that tell of hoop and train,  
Where grace and rank have wandered,  
The halls where ladies fair and leal  
First ventured to adore me!—  
And something of the like I feel  
For this old street before me.

The poems that, like the above, are solely devoted to London are, as the author evidently imagines from the title he has chosen for his volume, among the best in it. They almost all concern themselves with that limited portion of society which is pleased to call itself 'the world'; and when they stray below or beyond that sphere, they are inferior in excellence. *The Bear-pit at the Zoological Gardens* is perhaps an example of this; for 'the Zoo' is, even on Sundays, rather a vulgar place of resort, and our author may have felt out of his element there. The wit in the poem—for wit is not wanting—is strained; and the playfulness forced.

We liked the bear's serio-comical face,  
As he lolled with a lazy, a lumbering grace;  
Said Slyboots to me (just as if she had none):  
'Papa, let's give Bruin a bit of your bun.'

Says I: 'A plum bun might please wistful old Bruin,  
He can't eat the stone that the cruel boy threw in;  
Stick yours on the point of mamma's parasol,  
And perhaps he will climb to the top of the pole.

'Some bears have got two legs, and some have got more,

Be good to old bears if they've no legs or four;  
Of duty to age you should never be careless,  
My dear, I am bald, and I soon may be hairless!

'The gravest aversion exists among bears  
For rude forward persons who give themselves airs,  
We know how some graceless young people they mauled  
Just for plaguing a prophet, and calling him bald.

'Strange ursine devotion! Their dancing-days ended,

Bears die to "remove" what, in life, they defended:  
They succoured the Prophet, and since that affair  
The bald have a painful regard for the bear.'

My Moral—Small People may read it, and run  
(The child has my moral, the bear has my bun),  
Does it argue that Bruin has never had peace  
'Twixt bald men in Bethel, and wise men in grease?

Perhaps, if the above verses had stood by themselves, they would have been pleasing enough; they would certainly make the reputation of any mere drawing-room poet: but Mr Locker has set up a high standard for himself, and they do not come up to it. He is the best writer of Society Verses of the day—with one exception, and that one has written too little to be his rival. Moreover, 'C. S. C.'\* has made a name—or at least an initial—for himself in a more ambitious line, as the translator of Theocritus. Before we leave this subject, however, we cannot resist the temptation of quoting a certain 'Alphabet,' much less known than it deserves to be, and the most perfect production of its kind, as we have always thought,

in the English language. Greater writers have attempted similar feats, but this *A B C* of 'C. S. C.' is by far the most successful of them. Difficult in its composition as an acrostic, not a line is forced or meaningless, but each drops into its place as naturally as though it was a volunteer, and not a conscript, and to express an apt thought rather than to serve an exigency.

A is an Angel of blushing eighteen:  
B is the Ball where the Angel was seen:  
C is the Chaperone who cheated at cards:  
D is the Deuxtamps, with Frank of the Guards:  
E is the Eye which those soft lashes cover:  
F is the Fan it peeped wickedly over:  
G is the Glove of superlative kid:  
H is the Hand which it spitefully hid:  
I is the Ice which the fair one demanded:  
J is the Juvenile who hurried to hand it:  
K is the Kerchief, a rare work of art:  
L is the Lace which composed the chief part:  
M is the old Maid who watched the girls dance:  
N is the Nose she turned up at each glance:  
O is the Olga, just then in its prime:  
P is the Partner who wouldn't keep time:  
Q's a Quadrille put instead of the Lancers:  
R the Remonstrances made by the dancers:  
S is the Supper, where all went in pairs:  
T is the Twaddle they talked on the stairs:  
U is the Uncle who thought we'd be going:  
V is the Voice which the niece replied 'No' in:  
W is the Waiter who sat up till eight:  
X is his exit not perfectly straight:  
Y is the Yawning fit caused by the ball:  
Z stands for Zero, or nothing at all.

It is sad to think that a man who can write verse like this should, through the misfortune of a classical education, have been led to waste his energies on Theocritus. Wit and humour are not so common among our modern poets that we can afford to lose him. It is only those who cannot be original that ought to be translators; just as those who can be neither, like ourselves, must needs be critics. In the present case, however, our task is easy, for there is nought to blame. There should ever be a welcome in these days of toil and struggle for such writers as those we have been quoting. If the fight is hard, so much the more necessity to have our leisure sweetened for us.

'Twere easy told  
That some grow wise and some grow cold,  
And all feel time and trouble:  
If Life an empty bubble be,  
How sad are those who will not see  
A rainbow in the bubble.

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